CHAPTER II

THE PROCESS OF DEGRADATION

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THE Jew's association with the European world began far back in Classical times. There are indications that even during the Biblical period he was known in the Greek isles. Aristotle encountered one, who is reported to have given him much information, during his travels in the company of Alexander the Great. They were very numerous in Alexandria—long the capital of Hellenic culture—from the moment of its foundation: and they were found in Greece itself at least from the third century B.C., when the classical glories had barely departed from Athens and from Corinth, In Eome and elsewhere in Italy, they were numerous from the second century B.C. ; and Italian Jews may still be encountered whose families trace their descent, according to legend, from the nobles of Judaea, brought home by Titus after the fall of Jerusalem.

In Spain, Jews were present in some numbers at least as early as the beginning of the Christian era, centuries before the Visigoths had absorbed the Romans, or the Arabs had displaced the Visigoths, or the Christians had driven out the Arabs. They were to be found in France from the first century onwards, well before the Franks arrived from beyond the Rhine to give their

name to the country. Inscriptions and literary evidence attest their presence in Hungary, in the Balkan States and in South Russia in the classical period, long anterior